



Elul: The Place Where we Meet





The King is in the Field

During Elul God becomes radically accessible, meeting us with presence, compassion, and welcome. This imagery invites us to consider how we, too, can step out of our palaces—of comfort, fear, or routine—to meet others where they are, especially children in foster care and their families, who are too often waiting alone in their own “fields.”

Song of Songs 6:3

I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine;
who pastures among the lilies

אני לדודי ודודי לי
הרעה בשושנים

Questions for Discussion

- How does this verse resonate with you?
- What kind of relationship is being described here—ownership, mutuality, belonging, something else?
- How do the lilies impact your view of the text? What might they represent?
- Does this text elicit God for you? If so, how?
- How might a child who has experienced broken attachments hear this verse?
- What does mutual belonging look like in our community? In the context of foster care?

Rabbi Yehuda Ha'Levi

I have sought Your nearness,
With all my heart have I called You,
And going out to meet You
I found You coming toward me.

דרשתי קרבתך
בכל ליבי קראתיך
ובצאתי לקראתך
לקראתי מצאתיך

Questions for Discussion

- What feelings does this text evoke in you?
- What's the difference between being in the field or among the lilies?
- Do you see “going out” as activating God's approach? Would God have come to him if he had stayed “in”?
- Why “go out to meet” something sacred or life-giving, rather than waiting for it to come to you?
 - Have you experienced that “going out” to find that what you seek is coming toward you? Or not?
- Anyone who has experienced loss or displacement may fear going out and actively seeking closeness
 - What inner tools do we need to seek a closeness we don't know exists for us?
- How can caregivers, teachers, or community members be the “ones coming toward” a child who is seeking?

Rav Schneur Zalman of Liadi on Song of Songs 6:3

“The king's usual place is in the palace. One must prepare, dress properly, and follow strict protocols to gain access. But in Elul, the king walks in the fields. There, everyone can approach—just as they are. He receives each person with a friendly, welcoming smile.”

Questions for Discussion

- What does it mean that “the king” leaves the palace and walks in the fields?
- What do you think changes when someone powerful or distant becomes approachable?
- How might a foster family or community act like “the king in the field”—approachable, open, meeting kids where they are rather than asking them to enter a palace they don't yet know?
- What are the “palaces” we may need to leave behind—comfort zones, assumptions, fear—to act justly?
- What motivates you to move into the fields of others' lives?
- Can you think of a moment when someone met you “in the field,” when you were not yet ready or fully formed—and what that meant to you?